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12-14-2020

## Examining the Education Dissertations at Andrews University

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**Examining the Education Dissertations at Andrews University**

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## **Abstract**

Citations from the bibliographies of Andrews University education doctoral dissertations completed in 2013-2017 were analyzed to understand the needs of graduate education students for collection management purposes. The study looked at type, citation age, and availability of the sources cited. The citations from the 31 dissertations were mainly periodicals (47%) and books (37%), with smaller percentages of dissertations, Web sites, and other forms of resources. A majority of the sources had a citation age of less than 20 years. The findings showed a weakness in the book collection, as only 44.54% of book citations were held by the library. In contrast, between 82-92% of the dissertations and periodicals were held by the library. The study generated a long list of periodical titles with a wide dispersion. Of the 24 periodicals that were cited ten or more times, 16 were found in at least one of the seven periodicals ranking lists in similar studies. Information from this study will help the library respond to the needs of the graduate education students.

## **Keywords**

Citation analysis, Academic libraries, Education, Dissertations, Graduate students, Andrews University

## **Introduction**

University libraries expend money and effort to provide for the needs of its students, but are the needs of the students being met? Undergraduates use the library in different ways than the graduate students, especially the doctoral students who are heavy users of the library. Since dissertations are the culminating product of the doctoral students' training and the result of countless hours spent in the library, those dissertations contain valuable information for scholars, researchers, and librarians (Gooden, 2001; Haycock, 2007). The bibliographies, in particular, are available for librarians to mine and explore because it is assumed that citations included in dissertations are not only related to the citing work but are also representative of the discipline (Radhakrishna, 1995; Wallace, 1989).

By counting, tabulating, and ranking the number of times a source is used in a dissertation (Edwards, 1999), we should be able to provide physical evidences of the library "collection's bibliographic breadth and depth" (Herubel, 1991, p67) and make relevant collection management decisions (Cox, 2008). Although there may be questions about the quality of doctoral dissertation citations (Beile et al, 2004), it is still worth analyzing what the authors used because their citations contribute to the understanding of the library's collection and serve as historical evidences of past library use.

The current study focused on the 31 doctoral dissertations accepted by the Andrews University School of Education during the years 2013-2017. Citation analysis (CA) was used in this study because of its many advantages. It is effective, unobtrusive, objective, non-reactive, low cost, nondisruptive, easily performed; it is not contaminated by the respondents' behavior, opinion, cooperation or lack thereof (Halliday, 2001; Herubel, 1991; Omoba & Fabunmi, 2010; Smith, 1981). The underlying premise of CA is that the more frequently a publication is cited,

the more valuable it is, the more frequently it will be used, and the greater the reason for it to be part of the library's collection (Johnson, 2014).

## **Background**

When Andrews University (AU), a small non-profit private university in the southwestern part of Michigan, became a doctoral granting institution in 1979, it included the Ed.D. program in the Education Department. In 1981, the department covered three areas: Educational Leadership and Management, Educational and Psychological Services, and Teacher Education. It began offering the Ph.D. degree in 1982 as granted and approved by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities. With some reorganization in 1983, the department was renamed the School of Education (SOE) with four departments: Educational Counseling and Psychology; Teaching and Learning; Leadership; and Graduate Studies in Curriculum, Administration, and Religious Education. (Andrews University, 2002-2003). From 2003-2004 and throughout the years covered by the current study, the SOE was comprised of the following three departments: Graduate Psychology and Counseling; Leadership; and Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum (Andrews University, 2003-2004, 2017-2018). Even though AU has been offering doctoral degrees for many years, no one has conducted a study of its dissertations in relation to library use and support until 2018 when Helms & Helms (2018) published a citation analysis of the Theological Seminary dissertations. Based on the recommendation of that study, the authors undertook the present study to focus on the School of Education dissertations in order to understand the extent to which the James White Library (JWL) serves its doctoral students as one of its core users.

## **Objective**

The objective of this study was to find out what the Andrews University education doctoral students used in their dissertations in order to understand how much the JWL supports the program and to gather information that will assist in collection development. The study addressed the following questions:

- a. What types of materials are used?
- b. What is the citation age of the sources used?
- c. How much of the cited sources are held by the Library?
- d. What are the most frequently cited periodicals?
- e. How do the most frequently cited periodicals compare with similar studies?

## **Review of the Literature**

Citation analysis is a technique of bibliometrics that examines the patterns and frequency of citations in a scholarly work. Its value lies in connecting one work to other works as well as to the researchers. (Levine-Clark & Carter, 2013). The earliest use of citation analysis dates back to 1927 when Gross & Gross (1927) did a study of professional journals in the field of chemistry. One of the first studies dealing with dissertations as a means of determining library support was written in the 1950s by William L. Emerson (1957) who analyzed 23 engineering doctoral dissertations dated 1950-1954 to find out how much Columbia University libraries supported the dissertations. According to his findings, serials were used more than monographs; English was the predominant language followed by German and French; less than half of the materials were 0-5 years old but there was wide range of serials that were 25-50 years old; 14% of the monographs and 21.5% of the serials were not available in the University libraries. It was not until the 1990s that studies focusing on student work and faculty publications began to pick up.

There were more citation studies in the field of science and technology than in the social sciences (Kohn 2015; Sherriff 2010; Smyth 2011).

Smith (1981) gave a list of eight applications or reasons for conducting citation analysis, and Ashman (2009) expanded it to ten categories as follows:

1. Literature of studies that focus on a particular discipline or subject
2. Type of literature studies that focus on one or more formats
3. User studies that examine specific patron groups
4. Historical and longitudinal studies
5. Studies that focus on communication patterns between scholars
6. Citation studies designed to evaluate quality or productivity of scholars or publications
7. Information retrieval studies that use citation analysis to create bibliographies
8. Collection development studies focused on using citation analysis to manage library collections
9. Publications about citation analysis studies
10. Publications that focus on the use or accuracy of citation indexes (p. 114)

Studies of citation analysis methodologies for the support of collection development was conveniently summarized in a table by Hoffmann & Doucette (2012). The article written by Smyth (2011) contained a summary of selected citation analysis studies using theses and dissertations. Sample citation studies of science dissertations were done by Flaxbart (2018), Gooden (2001), and Nabe & Imre (2008). Herubel's (1991) study of philosophy dissertations and Kuyper-Rushing's (1999) study of music dissertations are representative of the humanities. Representing the social sciences are Rosenberg's (2015) study of theses and dissertations in sociology and anthropology, Sherriff's (2010) study of history theses, and Tonta and Al's (2006) study of journals cited in theses and dissertations of librarianship.

Recent citation analysis studies of dissertations in the field of education addressed specific areas of education, such as Curriculum and Instruction (Haycock, 2004), Educational Leadership (Griffin, 2011, 2016; Thomas & Shouse, 2019); Child and Youth Studies (Tuñón & Brydges, 2005); and Workforce Education (Waugh & Ruppel, 2004). Some studies combined

education with one or two other subject areas or subdisciplines, such as Reading and Educational Leadership (Condic, 2015); Psychology and Education (Feyereisen & Spoiden, 2009); Educational Psychology and Civil Engineering (Fuchs et al., 2006); History, Psychology, and Education (Smyth (2011); and Education, Psychology, and Social Welfare (Edwards & Jones, 2014).

There were studies that compared different groups such as master's and doctoral students (Feyereisen & Spoiden, 2009; Smyth, 2011); faculty and students (Condic, 2015); traditional and non-traditional institutions (Tuñon & Brydges, 2009); or different eras, years, or range of years such as those by Condic (2015), Fuchs et al. (2006), and Smyth (2011); or with other institutions such as the studies done by Beile et al. (2004) and Griffin (2016). Since this study dealt with dissertations in the field of education in general, the works of Aliyu (2015, 2018), Maz-Machado et al. (2012), and Okiy (2003) were of special interest. Maz-Machado et al. (2012) provided a table comparing their findings with other education studies, some of which were specific fields within education.

A majority of citation analysis studies of dissertations focused on bibliographies. Like the studies listed in Hoffmann and Doucette's (2012) work which focused on citation analysis methodologies for collection development, the current study addressed type, citation age, holdings, and frequently cited periodicals. According to Herubel (1991), disciplines in the social sciences tend to lean towards journals like the sciences.

Citation age, which is determined by subtracting the citation's publication date from the dissertation's completion date, can assist in making collection development decision. This method was more helpful than simply the range of dates which was found in some the articles reviewed. The authors observed that citation age was not always addressed in previous citation



studies in the field of education. Based on citation studies in education written by Edwards and Jones (2014), Griffin (2011, 2016), Smyth (2011), and Thomas and Shouse (2019), the mean citation age of books ranged from 11.8 to 16.15 years and serials/periodicals ranged from 6.16 to 12.66 years.

Determining how many of the cited works are available in the libraries under study is another important information for assisting in collection development decisions. The following articles generated results that had collection development implications: Aliyu (2015, 2018) found that a majority of the core journals were not held in the University of Maiduguri Library, and Maz-Machado et al. (2012) reported that the University of Cordoba Library had only 16.24% of the journals cited.

A number of the citation analysis studies of references in dissertations generated lists of the most frequently cited periodicals (with varying terminologies, i.e. journals, serials) based on citation counts, such as those done by in the United States by Beile et al.(2004), Condic (2015), Edwards and Jones (2014), Fuchs et al. (2006), Haycock (2004), Thomas and Shouse (2019), and Tuñon and Brydges (2005); in Nigeria by Aliyu (2015,2018), and Okiy (2003); in Belgium by Feyereisen and Spoiden (2009); and in Spain by Maz-Machado et al. (2012). The current study provided a list of the most frequently cited periodicals. One feature in the current study which was not found in previous studies is a table comparing the present study's most frequently cited periodicals list with similar lists from other doctoral education citation studies.

## **Methodology**

This study used citation analysis to analyze the bibliographies of the 31 education doctoral dissertations accepted by the School of Education in 2013-2017. Each citation was entered in Microsoft Excel for analysis.

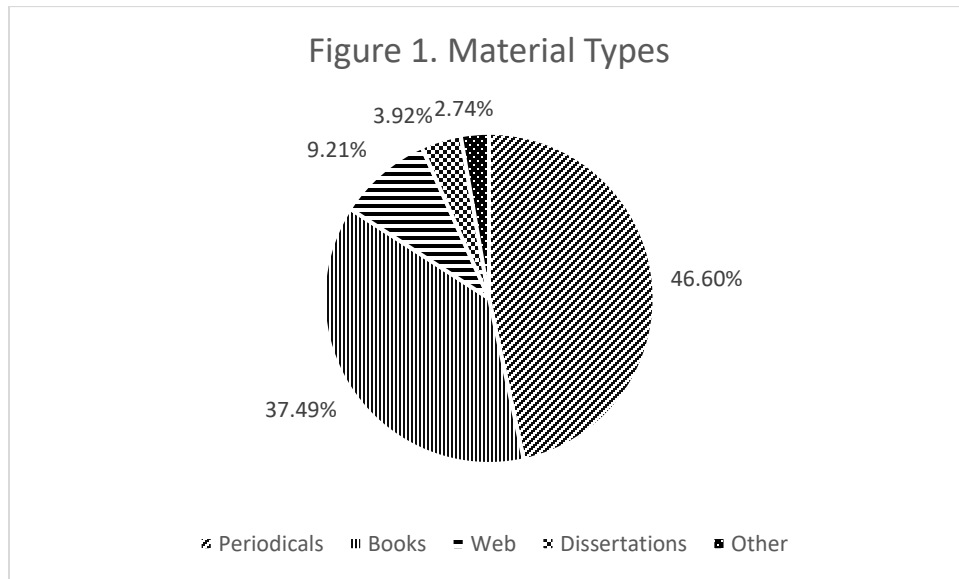
Each citation in the bibliography was coded for material type, age, and holding. Types were categorized as book, periodical, dissertation/thesis, Web, or other. “Book” included monographs, monographic series such as annuals, and book chapters. “Periodical” included newspapers, magazines, and journals. Each periodical title was considered as an individual, unique title regardless of continuations or title changes. E-books were coded as books and e-journals as journals since the lack of retrieval statements would make the data unreliable. “Web” was for freely available resources on the Internet. “Other” included unpublished materials, papers presented at conferences, ERIC documents, gray literature, interviews, etc.

Citation age was calculated as the difference between the year the cited resource was published and the completion date of the dissertation. The Library catalog, Periodicals A-Z list, and the Library’s online databases were checked to determine whether the cited material was held or not held by the library. Holdings information was based on what the library had during data collection time rather than when the dissertations were written.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The 31 dissertations contained a total of 439 pages of bibliography with a total of 5,062 citations. That came up to an average of 14 pages of bibliography and 163 citations per dissertation.

**Type:** As seen in Figure 1, periodicals were the most highly used material type at 46.60% followed closely by books at 37.49%. The remaining types in descending order were Web at 9.21%, dissertations at 3.92%, and other at 2.74%.



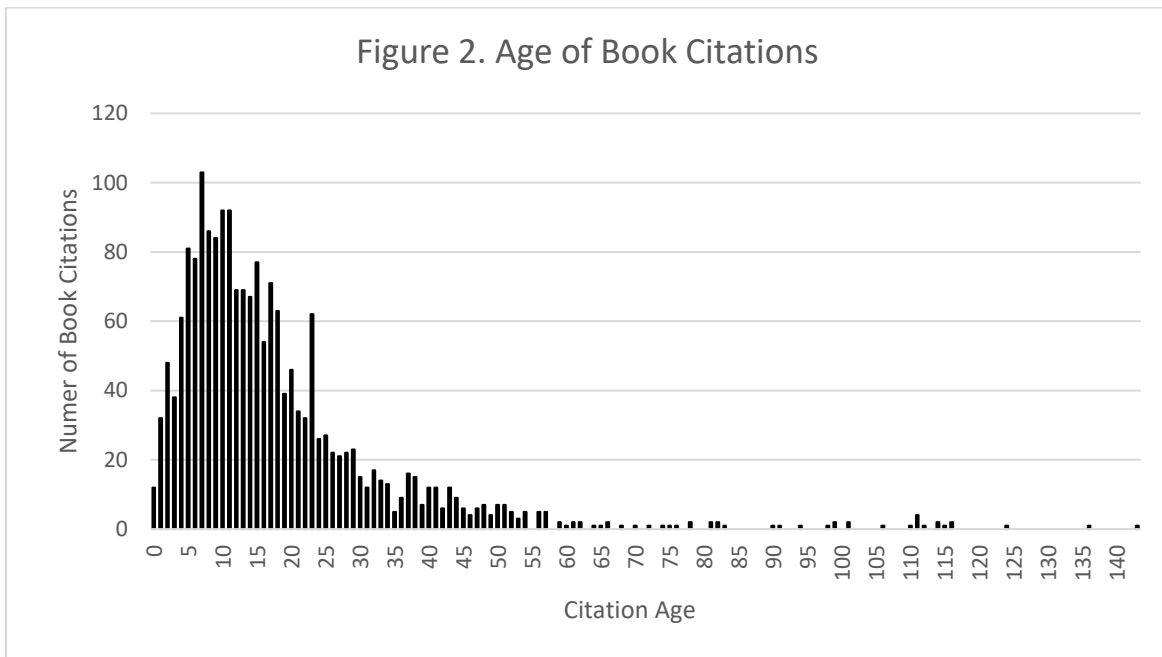
The prominence of periodicals (46.60%) and books (37.49%) with the former rating higher than the latter, is similar to other citation studies. Condic's (2015) study showed that dissertations in Reading and Educational Leadership contained 45.1% journals and 39.7% monographs. The study of education dissertations from three institutions by Beile et al. (2004) had 45% journals and 33.9% monographs. Smith's (2003) study of graduate students from various disciplines revealed that for the year 2001, 43% of the resources were periodicals and 38% were monographs. The results of the current study were also close to a citation study of three core journals of education done by Budd and Magnusson (2010) which showed that 45.5% were journal articles and 37.3% were books (26.3% books and 11% book chapters).

The ratio between periodicals and books is so close that they are almost interchangeable as shown in the following studies where there were more books than periodicals: Edwards and

Jones' (2014) study came up with 47% books and 46% journals, and Griffin's (2011) study had 39.8% monographs/book chapters and 38.4% serials.

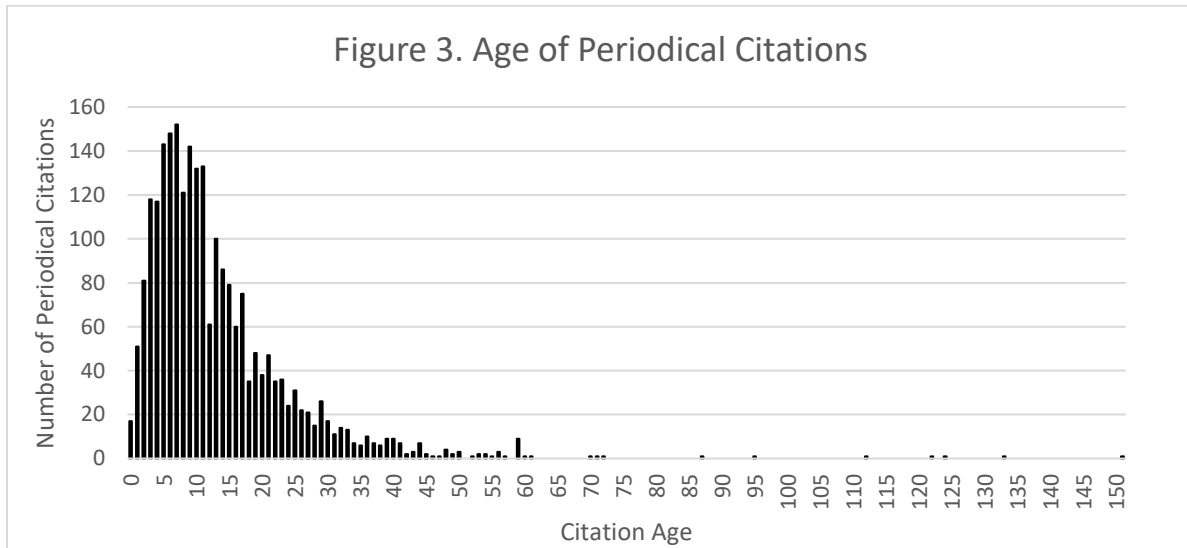
**Citation Age:** Knowing the citation age of materials is useful in providing information for retention. It helps in determining how long books/periodicals should be kept and whether backfiles should be deselected or kept in storage.

The books had a mean age of 17.89 years and a median age of 13 years. Figure 2 shows that the citation age of the books ranged from 0 to 143 years, and that many of the them were within twenty years of the completion date of the dissertations. This is similar to the study of Fuchs et al. (2006) in which there was heavy citing within 20 years for the combination of the civil engineering and educational psychology cohorts. Thomas and Shouse (2019) found that 80% of the citations were from books with citation age within 1 to 22 years.

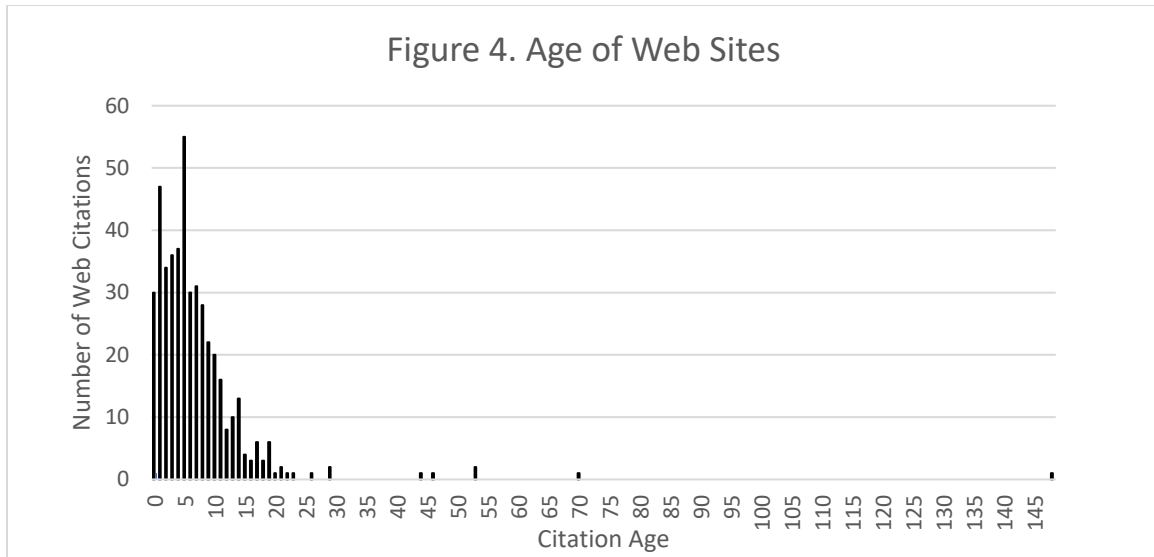


As shown in Figure 3, the citation age of periodicals ranged from 0 to 151 years. The mean age of periodical articles cited was 13.02 years and the median age was 10 years. This is

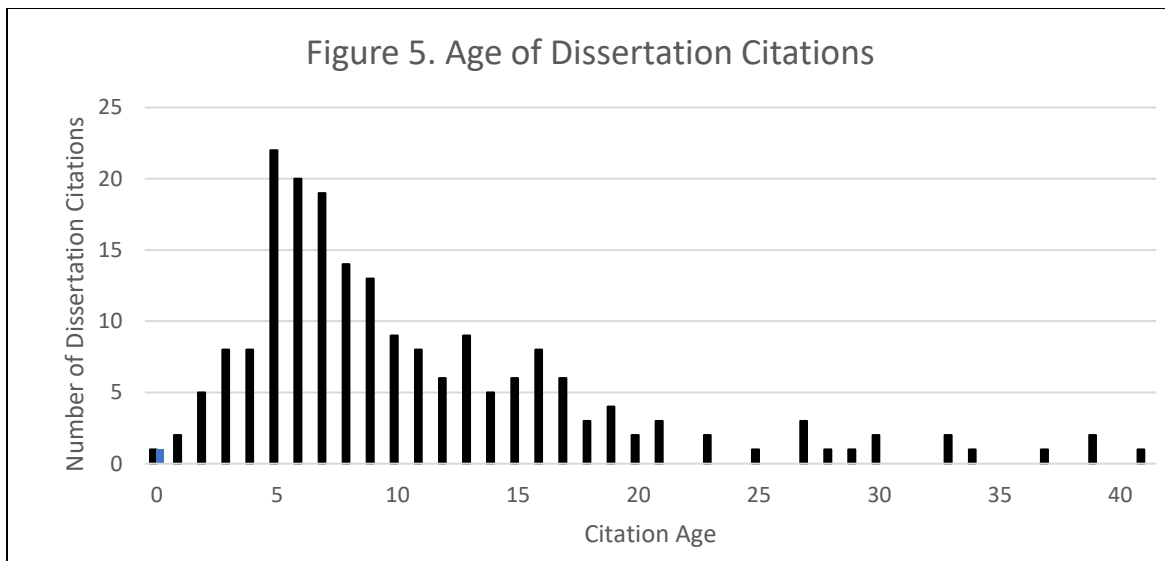
close to the findings of Thomas and Shouse (2019) in which the mean age of the journal articles was 12.65 years. Based on the preceding information about type and age, it is evident that periodicals were more current and more frequently cited than books.



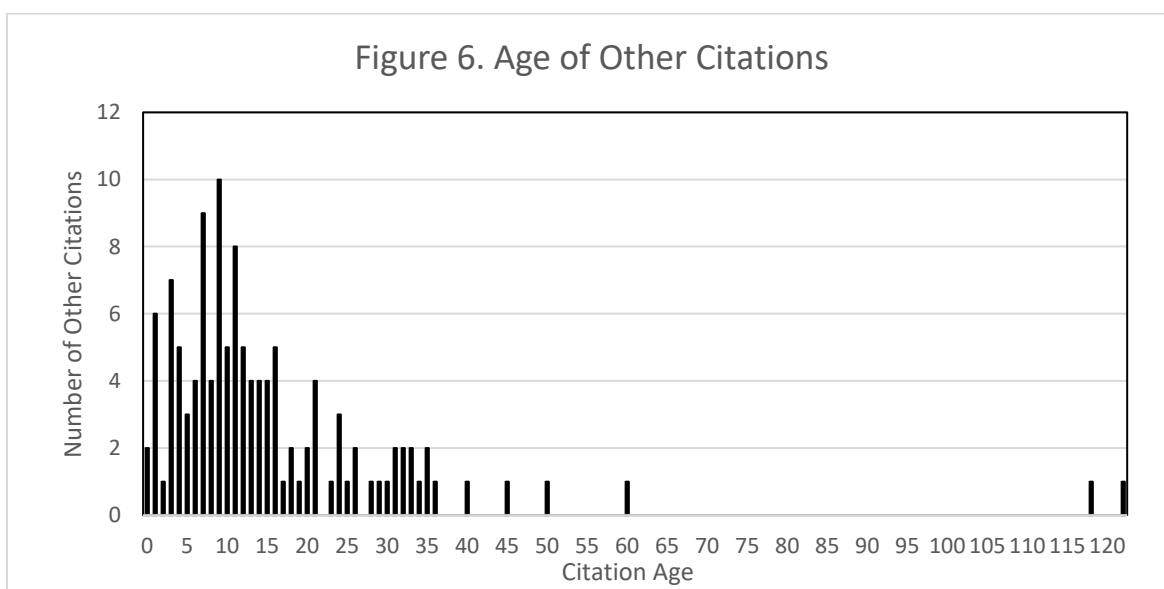
The remaining types of materials cited in the dissertations studied fell into three categories: Web, dissertation, and other. As mentioned earlier, Web sites comprised 9.21% of the total citations. Of all the types of materials used, the Web sites were the most current with 6.94 years as the mean age and 6 years as the median age. Figure 4 shows how the citations are clustered within the first ten years. Because of the ease of use and convenience of accessibility to current information from the Internet, we may be seeing more and more Web sites being cited in theses and dissertations. Smyth (2011, pp561-562) observed a “noticeable increase in the use of open web sites among students pursuing education degrees” which could be explained by the fact that “governments and other agencies have placed a great deal of state and provincial policy documents, curriculum documents, and other materials on the Internet.”



This study showed that while dissertations contributed to only 3.92% of the citations, many of them were fairly current but not as current as the Web. As shown in Figure 5, the age of the dissertations ranged from 0 to 41 years. The mean age of dissertations was 10.98 years and the median age was 8 years. Although several citation studies of education dissertations included dissertations as one of the material types, not much attention was given to the dissertations' citation ages.

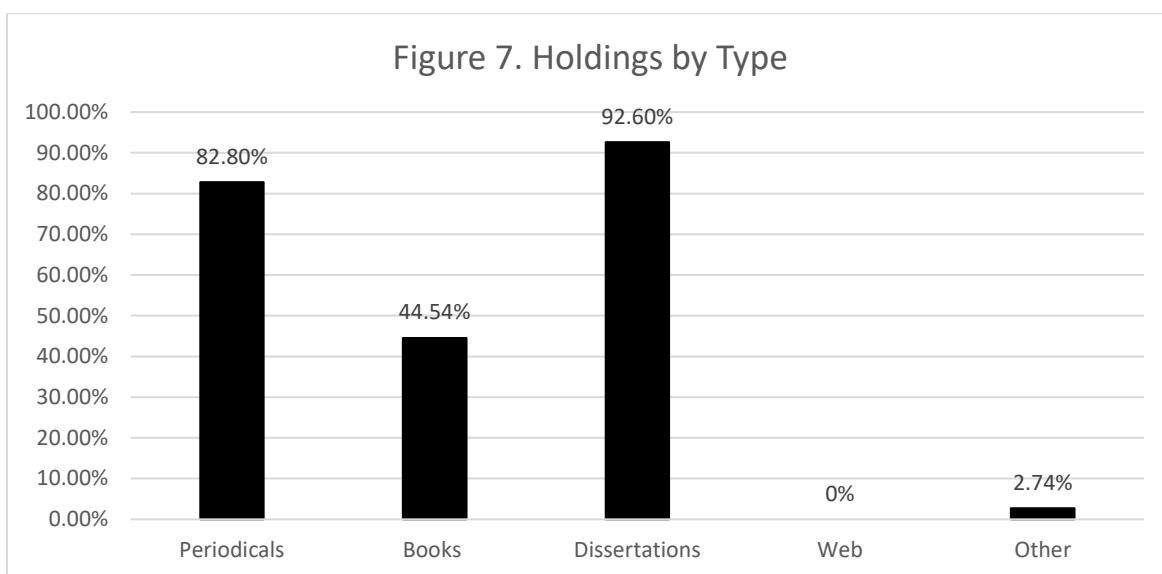


Sources that did not fall into any of the types mentioned above were classified as Other which served as a catch-all for the remaining types of materials. This was the least type of material cited in the dissertations, as it accounted for only 2.74% of all the citations. It has been observed that while many citation studies focused on books and periodicals, they differed in the way the remaining categories were addressed; some broke them down into smaller categories such as conference proceedings, ERIC documents, etc. And even if they were broken down into smaller parts, their ages were not always addressed. As shown in Figure 6, the age of the Other citations ranged from 0 to 123 years. The mean age of Other materials was 14.29 years and the median age was 10 years.



**Holdings:** The library held 58.99% of all the citations in the 31 dissertations. At 92.6%, dissertations came in first with regards to their availability in the library due to ProQuest Dissertations. With the increased access to full text sources, it is no surprise that periodicals came in second at 82.8%. The books came in third at 44.54% which is slightly lower than the 47% book holdings in the study of Thomas and Shouse (2019). Like the study of Edwards and Jones (2014), the library did not provide as much books as it did periodicals. The fact that the

library held less than 50% of the book citations deserves attention. Others came in last with only 2.74% of the citations being held by the library.



**Most Frequently Cited Periodicals:** The results of this study showed that 80% of the periodical citations came from 55.59% of the periodicals. Karin Griffin (2011), in her study of Ed.D. dissertations, found that 80% of the periodical citations came from 47.6% of periodicals. Both the current study and Griffin's (2011) study do not follow the 80/20 rule which states that 80% of the citations come from 20% of the periodicals as described by Trueswell (1969).

Table 1 presents the 1,061 periodical titles from the most to the least frequently cited. The first periodical was cited 61 times, the second one was cited 28 times, and so on until one reaches the bottom where a long tail is evident with 165 periodicals being cited twice and 675 periodicals being cited only once. The study showed that the dissertation authors had utilized a large number and a wide variety of periodicals indicating a wide dispersion.



Table 1. Dispersion of Periodical Citations

Number of Citations	Number of Periodical Titles
61	1
28	1
24	1
21	2
20	1
19	1
17	3
16	2
15	1
14	2
13	1
12	4
11	4
10	5
9	7
8	7
7	14
6	23
5	30
4	36
3	75
2	165
1	675

Table 2 shows the periodicals that had more than ten citations and their correlation to Table 1. According to the second column of Table 1, one periodical received 61 citations which according to Table 2 is credited to *Educational Leadership*. The second most cited periodical with 28 citations is *Personality and Individual Differences*. The third most cited periodical is *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Two periodicals were cited 21 times, namely, *American Educational Research Journal* and *Educational Administration Quarterly*.

Table 2 also shows how the current study compared with other periodical ranking lists of similar studies. According to the table, 16 of the 24 periodicals appeared at least once in another study's list. When the current study's most frequently cited periodical list was compared with

seven other lists, the last row of the table reveals that nine of the 24 or about 1/3 of the most frequently cited periodicals in the current study were found in Thomas and Shouse's (2019) list thus making it the closest match. Those nine titles were within the top 50% of the current study's most frequently cited periodicals list.

Besides providing information about the number of periodicals that were present in other lists, Table 2 also gives the number of times each periodical was cited in other similar lists as shown in the last column, and the Library of Congress (LC) classification of the periodical as shown in the second to the last column. Topping the list were *Educational Leadership*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, and *Journal of Educational Psychology* which were found in five other most frequently cited periodical lists. They fell under the LC classes of L11 and LB1051. Next came *American Educational Research Journal* (L11) which was found in four other frequently cited periodical lists. The periodical titles that appeared in three other lists were *Educational Researcher*, *Journal of Educational Research*, *Review of Educational Research*, and *Child Development*—all of which are classified as L11, except for one LB1101. *Journal of Teacher Education* (LB1705) was in two other frequently cited periodical lists. Seven periodicals that were found in one other list were mostly in the LB or BF classification with the exception of one in HM. As expected, the most commonly used periodicals were in the general field of education (L). The majority of the periodicals not found in other lists were from the B, H, or R classifications thus illustrating the interdisciplinary nature of education research, an observation which was also noted by Haycock (2007).

Table 2. Most Frequently Cited Periodicals Compared with Other Lists

<b>Most Frequency Cited Periodicals</b>	<b>No. of Citations in Current Study - 24 top titles</b>	<b>Beile, Boote, Killingsworth (2004)- Education - 17 top titles</b>	<b>Edwards &amp; Jones (2014) - Education - 10 top titles</b>	<b>Condic (2015) - Educational Leadership - 10 top titles</b>	<b>Thomas &amp; Shouse (2019) - Educational Leadership - 20 top titles</b>	<b>Haycock (2004) - Curriculum &amp; Instruction - 18 top titles</b>	<b>Fuchs et al (2006)- Educational Psychology - 16 top titles</b>	<b>Tunon &amp; Brydges (2005)- Child &amp; Youth Studies - 20 top titles</b>	<b>Call no. from OCLC Connexion</b>	<b>No. of Times Found in Other Top Lists</b>
Educational Leadership	61	1		1	1	1		1	L11	5
Personality & Individual Differences	28								BF698	
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	24		1						HM251	1
American Educational Research Journal	21	1	1		1	1			L11	4
Educational Administration Quarterly	21				1				LB2805	1
Journal of Adolescent Health	20								RJ550	
Phi Delta Kappan	19	1		1	1	1		1	L11	5
Educational Researcher	17			1	1	1			L11	3
Journal of Educational Psychology	17		1		1	1	1	1	LB1051	5
Journal of Educational Research	17	1			1			1	L11	3
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis	16				1				LB1028	1
Review of Educational Research	16	1			1	1			L11	3
Journal of Applied Psychology	15								BF1	
Journal of Marriage and The Family	14								HQ1	
Sociology of Education	14								L11	
Academy of Management Journal	13								HD28	
American Psychologist	12						1		BF1	1
Child Development	12	1	1				1		LB1101	3
Psychological Review	12						1		BF1	1
Urban Education	12								LC5101	
Journal of Teacher Education	11			1		1			LB1705	2
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	11						1		BF698	1
Psychological Bulletin	11						1		BF698	1
Teaching and Teacher Education	11								LB1025	
<b>TOTAL</b>		6	4	4	9	7	6	4		

### **Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

As brought out by this study, periodicals (46.60%) and books (37.49%) were the most prominent resources cited in the education dissertations. All other resources accounted for a small portion of the bibliographies, although it should be pointed out that since the Web accounted for almost 10% of the sources used, an increase in web resources may continue to grow as more and more government agencies and professional associations make their materials available on the Web.

The earliest citation age went to the Web sites with the mean age of 6.94 years which could be attributed to the fact that the Internet is able to make recent content available in a very convenient manner. Next to the Web sites were the dissertations with a mean age of 10.98 years; this is understandable in that the dissertation authors are expected to know what have already been written along their lines of interest and how their work builds up on previous research. The third category were the Periodicals, which comprised the biggest portion of the bibliographies, with a fairly recent mean age of 13.02 years. Falling behind the Periodicals were the Other types of resources with the mean age of 14.29 years. Books, by far, had the oldest mean age of 17.89 years. Based on the mean ages of the various types of materials cited, a majority of the citations were less than 20 years old.

While it is commendable for the library to have over 90% of the dissertations cited, attention should be focused on the periodicals and books because they were the major sources cited. Since the library held 82.8% of the periodicals, the students could have used interlibrary loan for articles that were not available locally. One outstanding piece of information revealed by this study was the fact that less than 50% of the cited books were held by the library.

For the purpose of this study, comparison was made with other studies even if there were slight differences in terminology, i.e. journals, periodicals; however, it turned out that the most frequently cited periodicals were comparable. Future comparative studies could benefit from standardized terminologies.

The dissertation authors cited many periodicals which resulted in a long tail of titles that were cited only once or twice. The most frequently cited periodicals list was composed of 24 periodicals that were cited ten or more times, 16 of which were found at least once in another published list similar to this one. An analysis of the cited periodicals attested to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of education. It was interesting to note how the current study's list compared with other lists to find their similarities and differences, and realize that the differences could be attributed to the fact that some lists were focused on specialized fields of education such as Curriculum and Instruction, Child and Youth Studies, Educational Psychology, etc.

Analyzing the bibliographies of the education dissertations has given the researchers insight into what the School of Education graduate students use in their dissertations and how much the library collection supports the graduate education program. The most outstanding point gathered from this study was the fact that the library should take the necessary steps to improve and update the book collection in order to meet the continuing needs of the graduate education students. To understand how the library can fully support the School of Education's needs, it is recommended that research focusing on the publications of the School of Education faculty be done in the future.

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